



1. Introduction

Background

From its prominence in the L'Enfant Plan, to its transformation from a shipping hub to an urban renewal neighborhood, the Southwest has a rich history of activity and change. Today, the neighborhood is a strong urban community that benefits from the great social, ethnic and economic diversity of its residents. In 1999, the Southwest Waterfront was identified as one of several target areas for inclusion in the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI), a program that aims to revitalize the District's waterfront as a destination for residents of adjacent neighborhoods, the city, and the region. Within the Anacostia River basin, the Southwest Waterfront presents a unique opportunity to create a vibrant waterfront neighborhood.

The Opportunity

The mile-long strip of land from the Tidal Basin to Fort McNair, between Maine Avenue and the Washington Channel, occupies an exceptional waterfront location. It is within walking distance of the National Mall and borders the well-established Southwest neighborhood in an area where a number of redevelopments are underway. This currently underutilized land along the Channel presents an extraordinary physical opportunity for positive change. Market conditions for redevelopment of the site are also favorable, with momentum and interest from the private sector for waterfront-related housing and a combination of retail, entertainment, and recreational uses.

Strong community support exists for a transformation that would achieve important public benefits, making the waterfront more accessible and substantially improving the amount and quality of public open space. The significant amount of land in public ownership provides a unique opportunity to address the complementary goals of creating a successful redevelopment while at the same time improving public access and amenity. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative has created a context for the transformation of the area, with a framework for creating linkages between the Southwest Waterfront and surrounding waterfront districts, tying together multiple neighborhoods and open spaces along the river.

Project History and Status

The District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) and the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC) recognized the unique opportunity at the Southwest Waterfront, and in October of 2001 formed a partnership to oversee the formation of a development plan. This collaboration allowed for an exploration of existing conditions and new potential along the Washington Channel undertaken within the framework of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, but with greater depth and attention to feasibility for immediate implementation than the AWI Vision. Since the DCOP/NCRC partnership was formed, a multi-disciplinary planning team has worked extensively with the community to produce a development plan for the Southwest Waterfront that builds on the neighborhood's existing assets to produce an urban waterfront neighborhood unique in the District.

The Approach

Early in the process, key principles to guide the redevelopment and transformation of the Southwest Waterfront were established with the community. The Southwest Waterfront would be both an extension of the neighborhood to the water and a regional destination, a new 'face on the water' for the Southwest neighborhood, with a mix of activities that would balance tourism with neighborhood oriented uses - recreation, culture, entertainment and retail, but also spaces for living and working. The area would become a vibrant urban waterfront close to the city center, complementing other parts of the Anacostia that will include recreational or natural park areas. Above all, it would be easily accessible by a variety of means, including walking from the adjacent neighborhoods.

Critical to seizing this opportunity to create a vibrant urban waterfront in the Southwest is the restructuring of a redundant road network, with Maine Avenue closely paralleled by Water Street and a band of surface parking. The ability to reshape this publicly owned infrastructure and other key aspects of the 1960's urban renewal plan leads to an approach that transforms Maine Avenue into an urban boulevard in the Washington tradition, with regular and easy crossings so that streets end at the water in public squares, plazas, and parks, all linked by an expanded Waterfront Promenade. This re-envisioned infrastructure becomes the framework for a program of new mixed-use, mid-rise development, which fronts on and animates these new public spaces on the water.



FIGURE 1.1
Location Map



FIGURE 1.2
Aerial View of the Southwest Waterfront and the Fish Market



DC Office of Planning

The District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) is the lead agency in planning the revitalization of the Southwest Waterfront. The Office of Planning has created a near-term development plan in partnership with the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC), in addition to coordinating a broader long-term vision for the Southwest within the context of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative.

Through the leadership of Mayor Anthony Williams and City Council Chairman Linda Cropp over the past three years, the Office of Planning has been built into a strong and dynamic agency that is working with District residents to guide the future of Washington DC.

The Office of Planning:

- Works with residents in every District neighborhood to create visions and action plans for their communities, so that city resources can be linked to priorities established by neighborhood residents.
- Develops thoughtful plans for revitalizing long-neglected neighborhoods in our city. The H Street Revitalization Plan, the Georgia Avenue Revitalization Initiative, the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the Transit Oriented Development Strategy and other projects are the first steps in neighborhood and commercial revitalization.
- Works to protect the District's neighborhoods and ensure the quality of future development by advising the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the Zoning Commission and other city agencies on compliance of new building projects with the adopted laws, regulations, and plans of the city.
- Protects the city's cultural heritage and historic resources by incorporating historic preservation into the planning process. In October 2000, the Office of Historic Preservation officially joined DCOP and now collaborates on preservation issues in the larger context of planning.
- Utilizes state-of-the-art technology on all Planning Initiatives. The newly created Planning and Design Information Technology division supports all planning activities with Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis, computer-aided design, graphic design, and information technology development. The division is expanding its role as the state data center for the US Census and as a leader in the Washington G.I.S. Consortium.

National Capital Revitalization Corporation

The National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC) and its subsidiary, the Redevelopment Land Agency Revitalization Corporation (RLARC) will be the primary implementers of the Southwest Waterfront Development Plan. Both corporations have made significant investments in the Southwest Waterfront; NCRC owns the Gangplank Marina, recently acquired the former Hogates site, and has partnered with the Office of Planning to commission the Southwest Waterfront Development Plan. RLARC owns much of the property along the waterfront, most of which is under long-term lease.

NCRC is an independent instrumentality of the District of Columbia created to stimulate economic development throughout the District, primarily in underserved neighborhoods, through real estate development, business development, and jobs creation. Established by DC Council legislation and funded through an initial Congressional appropriation of \$25 million, NCRC has been operational since January 2001. NCRC's Board of Directors consists of seven members: three Presidential appointees and four Mayoral appointees. The Mayor and the District's Chief Financial Officer serve ex-officio.

NCRC spurs economic development through: (1) land assemblage, (2) debt and equity project financing, (3) tax-exempt bonding authority, (4) Fannie Mae financing of \$75 million for projects with a housing component, (5) eminent domain, and (6) project management of complex development projects.

RLARC, an independent instrumentality of the District and a not-for-profit subsidiary of NCRC, was created to manage and dispose of the properties formerly held by the District's Redevelopment Land Agency (DCRLA). The transfer of a portfolio of approximately 80 properties was executed on January 15, 2002. The RLARC has the same Board of Directors and CEO as NCRC and is funded through lease and disposition proceeds.

The Southwest Waterfront is one of NCRC's priority development areas. In Fall 2001, NCRC's Board approved a payment of \$150,000 to the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) to fund a detailed development plan for the Southwest Waterfront. NCRC has worked closely with the Office of Planning, the consultant team, and the residents and business owners of Southwest to complete the plan.



FIGURE 1.3
Southwest Waterfront looking east

NCRC has also made other significant investments in the area:

- In June 2001, NCRC with the District acquired the leasehold interest in the Gangplank Marina, a 309-slip marina in Southwest.
- In March 2002, the Gangplank hosted the Amistad, a replica of the ship that was the site of a slave revolt that led to the first U.S. civil rights case. The event attracted over 25,000 visitors to the Southwest Waterfront.
- In September 2002, NCRC acquired the leasehold interest in the former Hogates restaurant, which will play a key role in the implementation of the Southwest Waterfront Development Plan.
- In winter 2002-03 the owners of Capital Q, a popular barbeque restaurant in Chinatown, will open Cantina Marina, a new Cajun/Tex-Mex restaurant, at the Gangplank Marina.

RLARC is working with the National Maritime Heritage Foundation to support the construction of the Pearl, a replica of the schooner that was used in an attempted slave escape from the Seventh Street Wharf in Southwest in 1848. The Pearl, as well as other tall ships, will eventually be moored on the Southwest Waterfront.



The AWI Framework

For too long, the Anacostia River and its surrounding neighborhoods have been neglected:

- The river's water quality is severely polluted;
- Obsolete transportation infrastructure isolates neighborhoods from the river and separates them from waterfront parklands;
- Waterfront open space is underutilized and suffers from severe disinvestment;
- Neighborhoods along the river are some of the poorest and most underserved in the city.

On March 22, 2000, Mayor Anthony Williams brought together twenty federal and District agencies who own land or have jurisdiction along the Anacostia River to sign the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The AWI MOU creates a partnership to transform the Anacostia River from the city's forgotten river to a gem that could rival any urban waterfront in the United States or the world.

The vision of the AWI is of a clean and vibrant waterfront with parks, recreation uses and urban waterfront settings - places for people to meet, relax, encounter nature and experience the heritage of the waterfront neighborhoods. The AWI also seeks to ensure that the social and economic benefits derived from a revitalized waterfront are shared by those neighborhoods and people living along the Anacostia River for whom the river has been distant, out of reach and unusable.

To support the efforts of the AWI, the DC Office of Planning (DCOP) established a steering committee of the MOU agencies, an advisory group of community leaders and a collaborative team of consultants. Working with the District and federal partner agencies, the AWI Team has produced a Draft Framework Plan to guide the revitalization effort. This Framework Plan identifies five critical themes to guide the creation of a great waterfront along the Anacostia River.

These five themes are:

1. A Clean and Active River

The AWI charts the course for environmental healing and the rejuvenation of water-dependent activities on the Anacostia River. Pollution must be mitigated, run-off controlled, streams and wetlands restored and water activities promoted.

2. Eliminating Barriers and Gaining Access

The AWI reconsiders the design of transportation infrastructure in order to gain access to waterfront lands and better serve waterfront neighborhoods. The community must be able to get to the waterfront on beautiful streets and bridges that become gateways to the river's parks and amenities.

3. A Great Urban Riverfront Park System

The AWI creates a system of interconnected and continuous waterfront parks that will be linked by the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail. The new park system will rival the great waterfront parks of the world and provide open space for adjoining neighborhoods, the city and the nation.

4. Cultural Destinations of Distinct Character

The AWI enhances and protects the distinct character of regional destinations along the waterfront. This will help create a vibrant waterfront that celebrates the cultural heritage of the river's neighborhoods, the city and the nation.

5. Building Strong Waterfront Neighborhoods

The AWI promotes sustainable economic development and re-connects the city to the river through new neighborhoods and the waterfront park system by creating opportunities to live, work and play along the river.

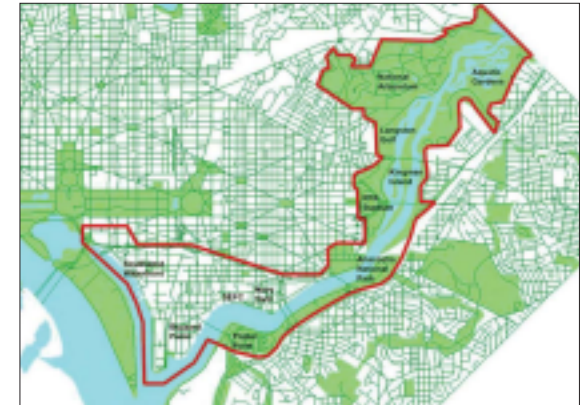


FIGURE 1.4
AWI MOU Boundary Map

AWI Principles	At the Southwest Waterfront
Clean and Active River	Reactivating the Washington Channel's edge with public piers, boating activity, and an improved promenade; Increasing green space and reducing asphalt near the Channel; Promoting green-building standards.
Eliminating Barriers and Gaining Access	Creating a grand staircase to the waterfront at the 10th Street Overlook; Connecting SW to Anacostia Riverwalk and Potomac Scenic Heritage Trails; Creating public piers which extend into the Channel at key locations.
Great Riverfront Park System	Doubling the amount of park space in the SW; Creating a system of open spaces along the SW Waterfront that are diverse in size and use; Connecting the SW to the Anacostia River through an enhanced trail system.
Cultural Destinations of Distinct Character	Promoting the waterfront as an important location for future museums and memorials; Creating a platform for a Museum or Memorial of national significance at the 10th Street Overlook; Developing a Civic Park on the waterfront at M Street, surrounded by cultural uses.
Building Strong Waterfront Neighborhoods	Planning for mixed-use, mixed-income development, including 770-825 overall residential units; Integrating a variety of land-uses that cater to the neighborhood and to the region.